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sick. It might be an encouragement to learners and stimulate a fellow-feeling of devotion to give attendants on the lectures who pass a satisfactory examination a certificate as to such attendance. This might entitle them to wear a simple pin with the initials of "Amateur Nurse" or "Home Nurse," giving a bond of sympathy with each other and a certain credential as to capacity in working among the poor. It is to be hoped that these suggestions may lead to the forming of some class in nursing, not as a "fad," but as a means of enlarging one's usefulness. Whether cholera comes or not, whether we have a war or not, the call for intelligent nursing of the sick is incessant and never fully answered. A girl may never do more than nurse Brother Tom through the grip or a Sunday-school scholar through the measles, but if she does that well, in the best way, she will have earned honor. Others, however, prepared or unprepared, must fight the dread enemy with their loved ones in the darkest of hours; and a course of lectures on nursing will be a great help to these nameless Florence Nightingales of our own homes.

C. H. CRANDALL.

THE RIGHT TO DIE.

A LEADING London paper has recently been conducting a gruesome discussion, under the caption "Tired of Life," upon the question, "Is suicide wrong?" It is significant that a large proportion of the writers who answer this query argue in favor of the moral right and sometimes the duty of self-destruction. Among other prominent contributors to this discussion is William Archer, the well-known dramatic critic, who, after asserting that nowhere in the Bible is suicide condemned, says: "What we want, what our grandsons, or great grandsons will probably have, is a commodious and scientific lethal chamber, which shall reduce to a minimum the physical terrors and inconveniences of suicide, both for the patient and for his family and friends. In a rational state of civilization, self-effacement should cost us no more physical screwing up of courage than a visit to the barber's, and much less than a visit to the dentist's. Mental effort will always keep people from wantonly and in mere caprice putting an end to themselves."

This morbid discussion has attracted great attention, and taken in conjunction with a recent magazine article, debating the question whether men and women have a right to kill their parents, relatives or friends, who labor under distressing diseases, or who believe that the time has come when they may depart, or who are worn out and useless to society, has suggested the title of this article.

To begin with, it is evident that such a question cannot be debated on Christian principles. These absolutely forbid a Christian to debate self murder. He accepts his life, and tries to do his best with it. He owns that he has no more right to kill himself than to kill any one else. He is a soldier who dares not desert his post. It is therefore necessary, while we write, to hold faith in abeyance. What we want to do is to show into what a dangerous sea the advanced thinkers have got.

The writer of the article in question is rather contradictory; but that is little to him. On the one hand, he denies the right of the State to execute a murderer. He argues that even when a man has forfeited all right to live

by breaking into the sacred house of life and slaying a fellowman, he has no right to be deprived of his life. On the other hand, when a poor creature is so sick that his friends despair of him, he proposes that "the doctors should furnish the means which he would not possess himself" (of killing him). In support of his argument this writer quotes the advice of the late Mr. Charles Buxton, who, in a book of desultory thoughts recently published, declares that it is a pity "that the extinction of idiots and persons in their dotage should not be undertaken, let us say, by the bishop of the diocese."

Prof. Francis W. Newman, in giving his views of "Euthanasia," as they call the right to die, declares that "suicide is sometimes a duty." He relates how a friend of his some years ago "withdrew himself from life somewhat prematurely by chloroform." This phraseology is charming. All that De Quincy wrote in his savage satire on "Murder Considered as a Fine Art" fades before the description of a gentleman "withdrawing himself from life." "I have no doubt whatever," continues the Professor, "that he did it under a sense of duty." There are men who think that a painful, hopeless life ought to be ended; that when a sick man is helpless, he ought, out of mere politeness, to imitate the Japanese, and give himself the *hari-kari*, or happy dispatch. "I look with horror," says Professor Newman, "on allowing tender kinsfolk (or nurses!) to sacrifice youthful health in order to add days or weeks to my life when worn out," and if to "my life," then to the life of another! "The registrar would be required to interrogate the patient before witnesses, who would attest his desire of death. I do not understand how anyone can fear abuse if death were legalized, under deliberately planned restrictions, such as I have hinted."

Another advanced thinker—a woman—arguing in the same vein, declares that the executioners of Booth, the assassin of President Lincoln, kept the murderer alive for twenty-two hours with brandy to prolong his tortures; and her logic—a woman's logic—is that we who nurse our sick relatives and keep them alive for "an hour, or a day, or longer," are equally brutal. Perhaps the better way to meet such arguments as this would be to ridicule them. But, apart from any other consideration, has it never occurred to those who advocate that incurables should be put out of the world, that many an illness which in former times was considered incurable would still have remained so had the sufferer been removed when doctors pronounced the case hopeless. In fact had this cowardly shrinking from life been fostered, our science would have been on a par with the science of the Chinese.

The man who, tired of life, or wearied of sickness, quits his post and deserts to the enemy, possesses false courage. To escape at perhaps the critical moment, would be to own one's self not fitted for this life, much less for another. And, besides, how is a man to know when he shall recover and when his life is useless? We do not wish to import Christian witnesses into this discussion, because they are fortified by faith, and often eagerly welcome death when it comes naturally. But it is safe to presume that in really civilized nations the fear of death will prevent most men from following the advice of these advanced thinkers and seeking the aid of the King of Terrors. We all know the Æsopian fable of the old man who, calling upon death to relieve him of his burden, was only too glad to send away the spectre when it came; and the easy philosopher who prepares himself to die will find, when he looks death in the face, that it needs another kind of courage than that given by sickness and *ennui* to meet it.

If morbid discussions of the kind I have outlined are a sign of progress, what, then, is retrogression? In olden times the Romans, when an epidemic of suicide had broken out among the Roman matrons and maidens, checked it by passing a law that the suicides should have their bodies exposed naked in the market place. This brought the women to their senses, and thenceforward they consented to live. Are we more savage than the heathen of that time?

Of much modern thought it must be said that it has become licentious. It needs discipline; so much so, that deep thinkers, finding that liberty degenerates into license, have more or less retired to the safer anchorage of conservatism. Have we not gone far enough in such debates? Have not advanced thinkers had "rope enough to hang themselves"? Do we not know men by their fruits? The advanced thinkers debate the rights of property, the right of labor, the right to die. They want to knock away every pale that can keep a man to the straight, safe, and right path. We are to break up the Ten Commandments and to throw the Bible out of the schools. We are to take "any man's horses," like Falstaff; and now it is proposed to legalize the putting an end to our own lives, if we are weak and sulky, or those of our relatives whom we are tired of nursing. Are we to walk any longer in such muckpits and bogholes? Are we, in the spirit of true liberty, to submit ourselves, like good soldiers, to the great Commander, to walk in soberness, honesty, restraint, temperance, duty, and self-control? Or are we, in the spirit of morbid, sulky, and priggish boys, to clamor for the right of doing just as we please, and sacrifice our own souls? Is it not time that we ask, Whither are we going?

GERTRUDE B. ROLFE.